

DATELINE: #108 NEW YORK  
LAWRENCE S. FREUND

SEPTEMBER 1, 1976

THE RETURN OF THE DOUBLEDECKERS  
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: DATELINE: NEW YORK CITY -- PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS HERE IN THE UNITED STATES -- BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK (AT THIS TIME). TODAY, A REPORT BY LARRY FREUND ON THE RETURN OF SOME OLD FRIENDS TO NEW YORK CITY'S FAMOUS FIFTH AVENUE.

VOICE: THEY CAME FROM ACROSS THE ATLANTIC ... AN OCEAN VOYAGE FROM BRITAIN TO A PORT IN THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY... AND THEN A TRIP ACROSS THE HUDSON RIVER OVER THE GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE ... TO NEW YORK CITY WHERE THEY ARE ABOUT TO BEGIN AT LEAST TWO YEARS OF SERVICE. THEY'RE NEW FOR NEW YORK, AT LEAST TODAY'S NEW YORK. BUT THEY'RE REALLY OLD FRIENDS HERE. THEY ARE DOUBLE DECKER BUSES.

THE DOUBLE DECKERS -- BUSES WITH A LOWER AS WELL AS AN UPPER LEVEL CONNECTED BY A STAIRCASE -- WERE ONCE AS FAMILIAR ON NEW YORK'S FIFTH AVENUE AS THE COACHES THAT STILL RUN IN MANY CITIES AROUND THE WORLD, PARTICULARLY IN LONDON. BUT IN NINETEEN FIFTY-THREE, THE TWO-STORY BUSES LEFT NEW YORK WHEN THE BUS COMPANY THAT MADE AND OPERATED THE VEHICLES WENT OUT OF BUSINESS. BUT, AS RON KANE, OF NEW YORK'S METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY CONFIRMS, THEY'RE COMING BACK:

TAPE: CUT ONE -- KANE

"WE WERE VERY LUCKY IN THAT NEW YORKERS, MANY OF THEM -- MYSELF INCLUDED -- HAD AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YEARS TO RIDE ON DOUBLE DECKERS. THE FIFTH AVENUE DOUBLE DECKER BUS WAS

TAPE: HERALDED IN SONG AND STORY BOOK. SO TO COME BACK TO  
(CONT) NEW YORK, OR BRING NEW YORK BACK TO THE WAY YOU  
REMEMBERED IT, IS REALLY PART OF OUR THEME. BUT MORE  
IMPORTANTLY IT IS A PROGRAM SPONSORED BY THE URBAN MASS  
TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION, WHICH IS PART OF THE  
FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, TO SEE IF THEY CAN --  
SIMPLY BY CHANGING A VEHICLE -- ATTRACT NEW RIDERS TO  
MASS TRANSPORTATION."

VOICE: AS NEW YORK TRANSIT OFFICIAL RON KANE EXPLAINS, THE REAL  
AIM OF THE BUS EXPERIMENT -- AND THAT'S WHAT IT IS -- IS  
TO DISCOVER WHETHER THE DOUBLE DECKER BUSES WILL GET  
PEOPLE OUT OF THEIR CARS AND ABOARD MASS TRANSPORTATION.  
PLANNERS HOPE THAT WOULD HELP RELIEVE TRAFFIC JAMS,  
POLLUTION AND NOISE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, IN NEW YORK AND  
OTHER AMERICAN CITIES. FOUR OF THE NEW BUSES WERE  
BOUGHT BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, WHICH IS CARRYING OUT THE  
TWO-YEAR, DOUBLE DECKER TEST IN NEW YORK CITY, WITH THE  
FOUR OTHER BUSES PAID FOR BY NEW YORK STATE...

TAPE: CUT TWO -- KANE

"THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN SUCH A LARGE ROLE IN  
PROVIDING CAPITAL SUBSIDIES (MONEY) FOR ACQUIRING BUSES ...  
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROVIDES ABOUT EIGHTY PERCENT OF THE  
MONEY TO ACQUIRE BUSES NOT ONLY FOR NEW YORK CITY BUT FOR  
ALMOST EVERY MAJOR CITY IN THE COUNTRY. AND WITH THAT TYPE  
OF AN OUTLAY, THEY WANTED TO DETERMINE JUST WHAT KIND OF  
BUS EACH CITY CAN BEST USE."

VOICE: NEW YORK'S EIGHT NEW DOUBLE DECKERS WERE ALL MADE IN  
BRITAIN BY BRITISH LEYLAND, THE WORLD'S BIGGEST DOUBLE DECKER  
EXPORTER WHICH HAS SHIPPED SIMILAR MODELS TO SUCH CITIES AS  
SINGAPORE, STOCKHOLM AND HONG KONG. ANOTHER EXPERIMENT IS  
BEING CARRIED OUT IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, USING DOUBLE  
DECKERS MANUFACTURED BY A WEST GERMAN FIRM. HERE IN NEW YORK  
THE DOUBLE DECKERS JOIN A FLEET OF FOUR THOUSAND

VOICE: SINGLE DECK -- BUSES -- ALONG WITH SEVEN THOUSAND SUBWAY  
(CONT) CARS. TRANSIT OFFICIALS WANT TO SEE IF THE DOUBLE DECKERS  
ATTRACT NEW RIDERS. . . NOT PEOPLE SIMPLY SWITCHING FROM  
OLDER BUSES AND TRAINS. SAYS RON KANE:

TAPE: CUT THREE -- KANE

"I DO THINK THAT IN ADDITION TO THE SIGHTSEER, THE OUT  
OF TOWN VISITOR, THERE WILL BE AN AWFUL LOT OF NOSTALGIA  
GENERATED BY OUR DOUBLE DECKERS. AND THE INTEREST RIGHT  
NOW, THE INTEREST THAT HAS BEEN GENERATED IN THE PRESS,  
BY LETTER, BY TELEPHONE IS JUST OVERWHELMING."

VOICE: NEW YORK BUS DRIVERS -- SOME OF THEM VETERANS OF THE  
DOUBLE DECKERS THAT WENT OUT OF SERVICE IN NINETEEN  
FIFTY-THREE -- HAVE BEEN PRACTICING BEHIND THE STEERING  
WHEELS OF THE EIGHT NEW ARRIVALS. THERE SEEMS TO BE  
LITTLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DRIVING THE TWO-DECK BUSES AND  
THE TRADITIONAL ONE-LEVEL VARIETY. BUT, SAYS RON KANE, THE  
DRIVERS WILL NOW BE KEEPING AN EYE ON WHAT'S ON TOP AS WELL  
AS WHAT IS IN FRONT OF THEIR FOUR AND ONE THIRD METER  
HIGH (14.5 FOOT) VEHICLES...

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- KANE

"THERE ARE LIGHT POLES AND TRAFFIC SIGNS AND TRAFFIC  
LIGHTS AND TREE BRANCHES AND OTHER THINGS WHICH THE  
DRIVER MUST FAMILIARIZE HIMSELF WITH ON THE ROUTE, AND  
MAKE SURE HE IS AWARE OF WHERE THESE LOW HANGING DEVICES  
ARE AND MAKE SURE HE STEERS CLEAR."

VOICE: TRANSPORTATION OFFICIAL RON KANE IS OPTIMISTIC THAT  
NEW YORK'S NEW AIR-CONDITIONED DOUBLE DECKER BUSES WILL  
BE A BONUS FOR THE CITY AND WILL MEET THE TEST BY ATTRACTING  
NEW RIDERS. BUT THE BUSES WILL ALSO HAVE TO PROVE THEM-

VOICE: SELVES BY TAKING THE PUNISHMENT OF NEW YORK CITY TRAFFIC.  
(CONT) "CAN THEY ENDURE OUR STREETS?" ASKS RON KANE.  
HE'LL HAVE THE ANSWER IN TWO YEARS.

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